

2 December 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Tom Latimer
White House Staff

SUBJECT : Photographic Satellite Coverage of
the USSR

1. This memorandum is in response to Mr. Kissinger's request for information on the types and extent of photographic satellite coverage of the USSR and its adequacy in terms of quantity and quality.

Search Coverage of the USSR

2. The CORONA medium-resolution (6 to 12 feet) search system is the only satellite imagery system available to provide the broad area coverage necessary for detecting new strategic activities or deployments. During FY 1970 there were five CORONA search missions which yielded ten "buckets" of film, with an on-orbit total of 89 days, or about 25 percent of the time. Each mission lasted about 18 days and the average interval between the end of one search mission to the beginning of the next was about 60 days. A CORONA mission typically provides cloud-free coverage of about two million square miles of the USSR. The standing USIB requirements for photographic search of the USSR call for at least 80 percent of 3.0 million square nautical miles defined as the "built-up" area of the USSR to be covered during any six-month period, and 75 percent of 3.5 million square nautical miles defined as the remote, or "undeveloped" areas to be covered annually. The objective of the area search requirement is to assure the timely detection of any significant new activity, regardless of location.

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3. During the last two years about two-thirds (68 percent) of the built-up area of the Soviet Union has been covered on the average with cloud-free CORONA search photography during any six-month period. It has taken about eight months on the average to obtain coverage of 80 percent. About 40 percent of the area has generally been covered with photography less than three months' old.

4. In addition to standing search requirements, about 25 percent of the film on each CORONA mission is used for directed coverage of high-priority areas such as ICBM complexes and the Sino-Soviet border region. As a result, for example, during the last two years, more than 90 percent of the total area of the Soviet SS-9 ICBM complexes, including a 25-mile search perimeter, has been covered on the average during any six-month period.

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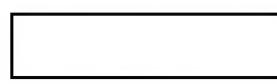


13. Obviously, I have generalized much of the data above and any points can be amplified if desired. I have not included cost figures. If these are needed, I suggest that they be obtained from the NRO.



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